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Culture of peace

Promotion and protection of human rights

Letter dated 2 April 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose, in my capacity as Chair of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Group in New York, a statement by the Group on the release of a defamatory film against Islam by a Dutch parliamentarian (see annex).

It is requested that the present letter kindly be issued as a document of the General Assembly under items 49 and 70 of the agenda.

(Signed) Munir Akram
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 2 April 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Organization of the Islamic Conference statement on the release of a defamatory film against Islam by a Dutch parliamentarian

The Organization of the Islamic Conference Group in New York condemns the release of the sacrilegious film by a Dutch parliamentarian about the Holy Koran and the Prophet Muhammad. This film distorts the peaceful message of Islam by selective and out-of-context quotations as well as biased interpretations of the verses of the Holy Koran. The film has evoked wide condemnation and reaction throughout the world, including by the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations as well as by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and various United Nations special rapporteurs.

Such insults and distortions of religions and the holy books cannot be justified on the pretext of freedom of opinion and expression. They undermine the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations to promote friendly relations among nations. The film violates articles 3 and 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that prohibit any advocacy of racial or religious hatred. The Organization of the Islamic Conference demands that the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, in accordance with his/her renewed mandate, to report on instances in which the abuse of the right to freedom of expression constitutes an act of and incitement to racial or religious hatred and discrimination.

The film is an act of religious hatred and a racist and xenophobic attempt to advance a narrow political agenda. It could merely serve to disturb peace, stability and social harmony within and among States. For 1.3 billion Muslims around the world, it is an attempt to impede the enjoyment of the right to practise and manifest their religion without fear or coercion, particularly for those who live in non-Muslim countries. Despite this blatant provocation, Muslims have shown restraint and responsibility. However, recurrence of similar offences could spark wider anger, a matter that underlines the need for a joint commitment to show sensitivity and respect for the religion and beliefs of others in accordance with international law.

The Dutch Government is urged to initiate legal action on the implications of the release of the film in accordance with its national and international obligations. The Organization of the Islamic Conference Group also urges all concerned parties to exert their efforts to prevent further dissemination of this provocative film, and the repetition of defamatory actions offending Muslims, that could undermine the ongoing efforts to promote peaceful coexistence, based on understanding of and tolerance and respect for and among religions and civilizations.